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Report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination on the work of its resumed thirty-seventh session

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Supplement No. 16A (A/52/16/Add.1)

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NOTE

Symbols of United Nations documents are composed of capital letters combined with figures. Mention of such a symbol indicates a reference to a United Nations document.

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I. ORGANIZATION OF THE RESUMED SESSION

1. Pursuant to the decision taken at its resumed organizational session, on 5 September 1997 (29th meeting), the Committee for Programme and Coordination held its resumed thirty-seventh session at United Nations Headquarters from 13 to 17 October 1997. It held six meetings (30th to 35th meetings) and 4 informal consultations.

A. Agenda

2. The agenda for the resumed thirty-seventh session, adopted by the Committee at its 30th meeting, is reproduced in annex I to the present report.

3. In adopting the agenda, the attention of the Committee was drawn to its terms of reference contained in Economic and Social Council resolution 2008 (LX) of 14 May 1976, the relevant provisions of General Assembly resolution 41/213 of 19 December 1986 and the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation.

B. Composition of the Bureau

4. At its resumed thirty-seventh session, the members of the Bureau were as follows:

Chairman: Mr. Wolfgang Stockl (Germany)

Vice-Chairmen: Mr. Amr Nour (Egypt)
Mr. Anuson Chinvanno (Thailand)
Mr. Zbigniew Szymanski (Poland)

Rapporteur: Mrs. Sharon Brennen-Haylock (Bahamas)

C. Attendance

5. The following States members of the Committee were represented:

Argentina
Austria
Bahamas
Benin
Brazil
Cameroon
China
Democratic Republic of the Congo
Egypt
France
Germany
Ghana
Indonesia
Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Japan
Mexico
Nicaragua
Pakistan
Poland
Republic of Korea
Romania
Russian Federation
Thailand
Togo
Trinidad and Tobago
Ukraine
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
United States of America
Uruguay
Zimbabwe

The Congo and Nigeria were not represented at the resumed session and the two vacant seats from the Western European and Other States Group remain to be filled.

6. The following States Members of the United Nations were represented by observers:

Algeria	Latvia
Australia	Malaysia
Belgium	Morocco
Colombia	Namibia
Costa Rica	New Zealand
Cuba	Panama
Honduras	Peru
India	Philippines
Jamaica	Syrian Arab Republic
Kenya	Tunisia

7. The Regional Commissions New York Office and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization were represented.

8. Also present at the resumed session were the Under-Secretary-General for Management, the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services and senior officials of the United Nations Secretariat.

D. Documentation

9. The list of documents before the Committee at its resumed thirty-seventh session is set out in annex II.

E. Adoption of the report of the Committee

10. At its 35th meeting, on 17 October 1997, the Committee adopted the draft report on the work of the Committee at its resumed thirty-seventh session (E/AC.51/1997/L.6 and Add.1-14).

II. PROGRAMME QUESTIONS

A. Proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999

Section 27C. Office of Human Resources Management

11. At its 30th meeting, on 13 October 1997, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered section 27C, Office of Human Resources Management, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-19991.[1]

Discussion

12. Several delegations expressed support for and reaffirmed the importance of the activities of the section. Some questioned whether the proposal in paragraph 27C.57 to abolish one P-4 post and one General Service (Other level) post in the Examinations and Tests Section would not adversely affect the objectives of the United Nations, as reflected in the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001[2] and reaffirmed in General Assembly resolution 51/226 of 3 April 1997, that the conduct of examinations for entry into the system be held with maximum efficiency, and the need to make significant progress in geographical and gender representation in the Secretariat. Several delegations called upon the Secretariat to provide assurances that the reform measures and the abolition of posts would not impede the improvement of equitable geographical distribution and gender balance in the Secretariat through the National Competitive Examination Programme. Some delegations requested the Secretary-General to refrain from reducing the proportion of entry-level posts at the P-1 to P-3 level for budgetary purposes, in accordance with resolution 51/226.

13. In connection with training, several delegations recalled General Assembly resolution 50/11 of 2 November 1995 on multilingualism, in which the Assembly stressed the need to ensure adequate human and financial resources for maintaining the teaching, at all levels, of the official and working languages of the Secretariat. One delegation queried the criteria for utilizing outside sources for training programmes. Another delegation recalled that one of the objectives of the subprogramme was to design and conduct training programmes to develop and maintain staff capacities and skills. That delegation reiterated that effective management of United Nations responsibilities required substantial provisions for training and questioned whether the level of resources proposed was not too low for an organization as large and with such a diversity of responsibilities as the United Nations.

14. One delegation questioned the implication of administering tests at Headquarters for an estimated 3,500 candidates annually, referred to in paragraph 27C.56, 3 (e) (iv). It was indicated that such tests were conducted by the United Nations not only for its own recruitment activities but also in support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Population Fund.

15. Several delegations requested further explanation regarding the delegation of authority to departmental/office executive offices and divisions of administration at offices away from Headquarters.

Conclusions and recommendations

16. The Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly the approval of the programme narrative of section 27C, Office of Human Resources Management, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999.

17. The Committee took note of the assurances given by the Secretariat that the National Competitive Examination Programme would, despite the proposed abolition of posts in the Examination and Tests Section, be fully implemented during the biennium 1998-1999.

18. Any measure of delegation of authority in human resources management activities from the Office of Human Resources Management to other units must be preceded by the introduction of an adequate system of accountability and responsibility.

Section 27E. Conference services

19. At its 30th meeting, on 13 October 1997, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered section 27E, Conference services, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999.[1] The section was introduced by the Director of Conference Services, who stated that the section would also be reviewed by the Committee on Conferences in accordance with its mandate.

Discussion

20. Many delegations reaffirmed the importance of General Assembly resolution 50/11 on multilingualism and expressed their concern that the reductions in language staff would have a negative impact on services. Some delegations pointed to the protracted delays in the issuance of summary records in most of the official languages and the adverse impact on the quality of translations, which could be a result of the increased use of temporary staff and the failure to respect standards for self-revision.

21. A number of delegations welcomed the technological innovations being proposed. One delegation called for a comprehensive strategy for New York, Geneva and Vienna, particularly in respect of the introduction of machine-assisted translation. Another delegation pointed out that not all Governments were in a position to access materials through computerized technologies and stressed the importance of printed materials.

22. Another delegation expressed support for net budgeting and indicated that the introduction of net budgeting would allow the United Nations Office at Vienna to meet unexpected increases in demand for conference services on the part of other organizations in Vienna without adversely affecting the work programme of the United Nations.

Conclusions and recommendations

23. The Committee recommended that the General Assembly approve the programme narrative of section 27E, Conference services, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999.

B. United Nations reform: measures and proposals

Introduction

24. At the 32nd meeting, on 14 October 1997, the Controller introduced the report outlining the programmatic and financial consequences of the Secretary-General's reform proposals described in documents A/51/829 and A/51/950 (A/52/303).

25. The Committee for Programme and Coordination was informed that the report (A/52/303) described the changes that would be required to the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 consequent upon the Secretary-General's reform proposals. The Committee was also informed that the General Assembly was in the process of reviewing the Secretary-General's reform proposals contained in document A/51/950.

26. The Committee was further informed that the programmatic and financial consequences of the reform proposals were primarily, in the view of the Secretariat, of an organizational nature and that all programme mandates addressed in the initial programme budget proposals would continue to be implemented. Where programmes were affected, namely those implemented by the former Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis and Department for Development Support and Management Services, and now integrated into the new Department of Economic and Social Affairs, details of the integrated programme activities had been provided.

27. The Committee was informed that the creation of the position of Deputy Secretary-General, as well as the proposed establishment, merging or dissolution of departments and other organizational units, were part of an overall strategy to ensure a more effective and better managed Secretariat.

Discussion

28. One delegation stated that the purpose of United Nations reform should lie in enabling the United Nations to respond effectively to the dramatically changing context of the international environment in which the United Nations was expected to function in the twenty-first century. United Nations reform should be carried out in a comprehensive and balanced manner as a whole, so as to ensure a revitalized and viable Organization capable of meeting the many challenges. Such comprehensive and balanced reform should be constructed on three pillars, that is, reform in the political area, including the Security Council, reform in the economic area, especially on development, and reform in the financial area, focusing on how truly fair and equitable methods of financing the activities of the Organization are to be realized. While supporting the major part of the Secretary-General's reform proposal in general terms, that delegation stated that the creation of a revolving credit fund was not acceptable.

29. Many delegations expressed serious concern and reservations about some of the Secretary-General's proposals, which, in several cases, went beyond the relevant mandates approved by the General Assembly when adopting the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001. In that regard, those delegations expressed the view that the reform measures and proposals must be fully consistent with the

medium-term plan, which constitutes the principal policy directive of the Organization, as approved by the Assembly. The main objective of the reform measures and proposals should be to enable the United Nations to implement fully all mandated programmes and activities.

30. Many delegations expressed deep regret that persistent questioning of the efficiency, role and mandate of the Committee for Programme and Coordination obstructed progress in the work of the Committee and prevented the adoption of substantive recommendations and conclusions. They expressed the view that the Committee, in accordance with its mandate and terms of reference, indeed had a role to play in reviewing and clarifying the programmes reflected in the programme budget, giving particular attention to programme changes proposed by the Secretary-General. Those delegations stressed that they saw no contradiction in the consideration of the programmatic implications of the reform proposals of the Secretary-General by the Committee and the consideration of those proposals by the General Assembly.

31. Some delegations expressed support for the Secretary-General's reform proposals as a package. They stated that discussions in the Committee should not cut across work currently under way in the General Assembly. They made clear that they had no wish to hold up the work of what they saw as an important committee, whose discussions, they said, could make an important contribution. They expressed their view that it was not for the Committee at this stage to challenge specific aspects of the proposals, but rather, it was the Committee's role to comment on and clarify only the programme implications of the Secretary-General's reform proposals to his proposed programme budget. They noted that this view applied equally to all sections of the Committee's report.

32. One delegation noted that the Organization had been in an almost constant state of reorganization and financial difficulties since 1987, and that this had affected the preparation, approval and implementation process of the budget.

33. One delegation emphasized that the reform could not be reduced to an exercise of cost diminution. It has to strengthen the United Nations as an active and effective world forum, which also implies efficiency, transparency, responsibility and credibility. As every reform project, this one has its merits and shortcomings. The current negotiations of the reform project have to make prevalent the advantages and reduce the adverse effects.

34. Many delegations expressed disagreement with the proposals relating to the creation of a number of high-level posts at a time when the Organization continued to face an unprecedented financial crisis. They also stressed that there were no convincing programmatic justifications for the upgrading of some posts to higher levels, and requested the Secretary-General to review his proposals regarding those posts.

35. A number of delegations expressed concern about the decrease in the number of lower-level posts while there was an increase in the number of high-level posts. They were also of the view that the reduction in the number of posts should not have an adverse effect on the delivery of activities, nor should the reduction in administrative costs impair the work of the Secretariat. In that regard, some delegations requested the Secretary-General to refrain from reducing the proportion of entry-level posts at the P-1 to P-3 levels for budgetary purposes in accordance with General Assembly resolution 51/226.

36. A number of delegations expressed regret that the Secretary-General had already issued bulletins announcing changes to the Secretariat structure, which contradicted relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, particularly resolution 51/219 of 18 December 1996; in that regard, those delegations stressed that such changes required prior approval by the Assembly. Other delegations were of the view that organizational changes were within the authority of the Secretary-General as chief administrative officer of the Organization.

37. Many delegations stressed that the Secretary-General was the chief administrative officer of the Organization. Nonetheless, those delegations stressed that any reform measures that did not require General Assembly approval should be implemented within the framework of existing legislative mandates. Action on any measures and proposals set out in document A/51/950, unless decided otherwise, should be implemented without prejudice to existing resolutions and decisions of the Assembly or of other intergovernmental bodies.

38. One delegation expressed the view that the Charter of the United Nations and the General Assembly gave the Secretary-General certain authority that must be respected. The same delegation further stated that while the Secretary-General should pay due attention to the views of Member States as he implemented his reform plans, the Assembly did not have the authority to deny the Secretary-General the right to proceed with implementing the reform proposals, which fell within his authority as chief administrative officer of the United Nations. Many delegations enquired about the legislative mandates for some of the actions being implemented by the Secretary-General which, in their view, did not exist.

39. One delegation stressed that the Secretary-General's reform proposals were constrained to the General Assembly's decision on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999. That delegation concluded that the authority of the Secretary-General had its limits vis-à-vis the role of the Assembly as established in the Charter regarding the budgetary process.

40. Many delegations reaffirmed the functions and powers of the General Assembly in accordance with the Charter and stressed that any reform proposal that might have programmatic and/or financial implications, including those related to the restructuring of the Secretariat, must be considered and approved by the Assembly.

41. Several delegations noted that the proposal to establish a development account would require revisions to the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations.

42. One delegation stressed that all sections of document A/52/303 should have been in the same programme format as the one used in section 7A, for consideration by the Committee.

Conclusions and recommendations

43. The Committee recommends to the General Assembly, when considering the reform proposals of the Secretary-General, to take into account the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001, which is the principal policy directive of the United Nations, as approved by the Assembly.

Section 1B. General Assembly affairs and conference services

44. At its 33rd meeting, on 15 October 1997, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered section 1B, General Assembly affairs and conference services, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 contained in document A/52/303.

Discussion

45. Most delegations expressed support for the creation of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services. Several delegations, while expressing support for the creation of the new Department, questioned the proposed transfer of responsibility for subprogramme 1.6, Decolonization, of programme 1, Political Affairs, of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001,[2] to the proposed new Department. Those delegations also objected to the transfer of responsibility for the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples from the Department of Political Affairs to the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services. Other delegations felt that the redistribution of activities related to the Decolonization Unit may have a negative impact on the activities of the Unit. Those delegations felt that the transfer of the Decolonization Unit from the Department of Political Affairs to the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services denied the political essence of the Special Committee and undermined the Organization's decolonization programme. Some other delegations referred to the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 which established subprogramme 1.6, Decolonization, with very clear mandates to be implemented by the Department of Political Affairs. Other delegations indicated that the transfer of the activities of a highly political issue, such as decolonization, out of the Department of Political Affairs to the proposed new Department did not appear appropriate and indicated that to fulfil the mandate in the medium-term plan, decolonization must remain with the Department of Political Affairs. Several delegations indicated that the question of the transfer of the activities of decolonization was a totally political issue and was not related to reform.

46. Many delegations recalled General Assembly resolution 43/47 of 22 November 1988 entitled "International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism" and all other relevant Assembly resolutions and decisions on the matter, and noted the resolution of the Special Committee, entitled "Decolonization programme in the United Nations system", adopted by consensus on 6 June 1997 (A/AC.109/2094). Those delegations also noted the letter dated 18 September 1997 from the Chairman of the Special Committee addressed to the Secretary-General (A/52/379). In that regard, the same delegations reaffirmed the political nature and substance of the mandate of the Special Committee and expressed their concern about the proposed changes submitted by the Secretary-General. Those delegations emphasized, therefore, that the Decolonization Unit should be provided with the full resources, as stipulated in section 2, Political affairs, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999[3], in accordance with the medium-term plan. The same delegations stressed that the Decolonization Unit and all the functions in the Department of Political Affairs related to the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the

Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples and the Special Political and Decolonization (Fourth) Committee must be maintained in the Department of Political Affairs.

47. Some delegations supported the proposal to combine the technical and conference-servicing units in the Secretariat. One delegation indicated that the activities of the new Department were not just subsidiary functions but were a substantive activity of the Secretariat. The creation of the new Department under a different organizational structure would not, therefore, adversely affect the programme of activities.

48. Other delegations indicated that there should be a rationale for proposing reform and revising structures of organizational units and departments. Those delegations queried why the secretariats of the Fifth and Sixth Committees were not proposed for transfer to the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services as had been the case for secretariats servicing other organs and committees, and stressed that such a transfer did not reflect equal treatment to all the secretariats of the Main Committees of the General Assembly. Those delegations expressed the view that all the secretariats of the Main Committees should be included within section 1B.

49. One delegation welcomed the proposal to enhance further the ability of the President of the General Assembly by supplementing the level of support currently provided.

Conclusions and recommendations

50. The Committee took note of the information concerning section 1B, General Assembly affairs and conference services, and draws the attention of the General Assembly to the variations between the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 and the proposals of the Secretary-General.

Section 2A. Political affairs

51. At its 33rd meeting, on 15 October 1997, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered section 2A, Political affairs, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 contained in document A/52/303.

Discussion

52. Information was requested on the activities relating to subprogramme 5, General Assembly affairs, and subprogramme 6, Decolonization, of programme 1, Political affairs, and programme 26, Disarmament, of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001[2], which were proposed for transfer from the Department of Political Affairs to the newly created Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services and to the Department for Disarmament and Arms Regulation, respectively, as referred to in paragraph 2A.1 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/52/303).

53. Some delegations remarked that the issuance of Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/1997/6 on the organization of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services appeared to prejudge the General Assembly's action on

the question, as it had yet to approve the Secretary-General's measures and proposals on United Nations reform.

Conclusions and recommendations

54. The Committee decided to discuss activities relating to subprogramme 5, General Assembly affairs, and subprogramme 6, Decolonization, of programme 1, Political affairs, and programme 26, Disarmament, of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001, under sections 1B, General Assembly affairs and conference services, and 2B, Disarmament.

Section 2B. Disarmament

55. At its 33rd meeting, on 15 October 1997, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered section 2B, Disarmament, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 contained in document A/52/303.

Discussion

56. Several delegations indicated that the narrative part of the section on disarmament and arms regulation, which contained references to "spread of nuclear weapons technology and material" and "weapons development", went beyond the objectives of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001[2] and other existing mandates of the General Assembly. Those references contradicted the final document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament which reaffirmed that the United Nations had the foremost responsibility to promote nuclear disarmament. Other delegations pointed out that the Assembly had recognized that the threat to international peace and security came from existing massive nuclear arsenals, and that there were multilaterally negotiated regimes that dealt with the "spread" of weapons, particularly weapons of mass destruction. The Secretariat could not assume, therefore, any role that went beyond those treaties since existing international legal instruments, including relevant disarmament conventions and treaties, provided the most appropriate forums to deal with those issues.

57. Some delegations also objected to the use of the term "arms regulation" as it might affect the work programme of the Department. Those delegations pointed out that the term "arms regulation" was mentioned in Article 26 of the Charter of the United Nations, which had never been put into effect, and should thus only be used in that context. They noted that they could consider the establishment of the new Department with the sole title of "Disarmament", which would be consistent with the title of programme 26 of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001. Some delegations pointed to the emphasis on non-proliferation, namely, a future preventive role, and to the absence of references to reducing existing stockpiles. The view was expressed that the programme of work on disarmament as contained in the medium-term plan should have been adequately emphasized, particularly since it was one of the priority issues and the principal policy directive of the Organization, as approved by the General Assembly.

58. A number of delegations felt that detailed activities to be carried out by the new Department should have been reflected in the Secretary-General's report and that details of the work programme of the new Department should have been more extensive. Some delegations pointed out that the narrative contained in paragraph 2B.3 indicated that the establishment of the new Department would entail the transfer from the Department of Political Affairs to the new Department of activities under programme 26, Disarmament, of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001, including the servicing of the Conference on Disarmament and backstopping to the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. On the basis of the assurances contained in paragraph 2B.3, those delegations indicated that a repetition of the activities already outlined in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 would not be required in the current report. Another delegation welcomed the efforts of the Secretariat not to reiterate those activities that were already included in the Secretary-General's proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 and made clear that while discussion in the Committee might seek to clarify aspects of the programme narrative through the medium of document A/52/303, that must not cut across work under way in the General Assembly in respect of the Secretary-General's proposals on reform (A/51/950). The same delegation believed that it was not for the Committee, at that stage, to challenge specific aspects of the proposals. Other delegations reaffirmed the role of the Committee to review the programmatic aspects of the proposals and that that role did not change regardless of the deliberations in the Assembly.

59. Several delegations expressed concern that the creation of the proposed Department would result in a duplication of the activities of the Conference on Disarmament at Geneva and reaffirmed the position that the creation of the new Department should not result in a secondary role in connection with the activities at Geneva. Those delegations stressed the importance of the need to maintain a balance between the two entities, each working within the context of the mandates entrusted to them. Many delegations expressed the view that the proposal should be proportionate to the supporting role, which was at present being played satisfactorily by the United Nations Centre for Disarmament. One delegation stressed the importance of the balance of functions between the Conference on Disarmament and the Department of Disarmament and Arms Regulation and expressed preference that the Department should be headed by an official at the Assistant Secretary-General level in order to avoid unnecessary competition between the Office at Geneva and the Department in New York.

60. One delegation stressed that appropriate resources should be given to the new Department on disarmament. That delegation considered that the level of resources approved for disarmament activities within the Organization should be maintained.

61. Some delegations expressed the view that the United Nations mandate on disarmament was the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. It could only be revised by the fourth special session devoted to disarmament, whenever that took place. The essence lay in disarmament negotiations. That was how consensus was achieved on mandates. Therefore, the centre of gravity should lie with the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission. The role of the Secretariat in disarmament was largely confined to servicing the negotiating bodies. This was being adequately done by the existing set-up.

62. Many delegations expressed deep regret that the narrative of the section on disarmament had not been drafted in accordance with the approved medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 and strongly requested the Secretariat to revise the narrative. Accordingly, those delegations made the following proposal for inclusion in the 'Conclusions and recommendations' part of the report of the Committee:

> 'The Committee for Programme and Coordination recommends to the General Assembly that the narrative part of the section on disarmament be revised in accordance with the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 and the final document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.'

63. Some delegations welcomed the Secretariat's assurance that the only changes being proposed were organizational ones.

64. One delegation expressed the view that the proposal of the Secretary-General merely reflected a redistribution of responsibility for programmes and subprogrammes that the Committee had reviewed earlier in the summer. One delegation also urged the Secretary-General to seek a capable person for the position of Under-Secretary-General, which would thereby relieve the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva of his additional responsibility as Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament as soon as was feasible. The same delegation emphasized that the disarmament position required full-time attention.

Conclusions and recommendations

65. The Committee was unable to reach agreement on the conclusions and recommendations to be made to the General Assembly.

Section 6. Legal affairs

66. At its 33rd meeting, on 15 October 1997, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered section 6, Legal affairs, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 contained in document A/52/303.

Discussion

67. Several delegations queried the proposed reclassification of the post of Assistant Secretary-General under the section. Those delegations indicated that the functions and the post of Assistant Secretary-General in the Office of Legal Affairs and the rationale for its creation were neither in the Secretary-General's initial proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999[4] nor were they included in the report of the Secretary-General entitled 'Renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform' (A/51/950) or in the letter dated 17 March 1997 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly (A/51/829).

Section 7A. Economic and social affairs

68. At its 32nd meeting, on 14 October 1997, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered section 7A, Economic and social affairs, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 contained in document A/52/303.

Discussion

69. Many delegations emphasized the importance they attached to the activities carried out by the Organization in the economic and social sectors, which must remain as a high priority of the work of the Organization, and stressed the need to ensure that the capacity of the Organization in those sectors would be enhanced by the proposed consolidation of the three former Departments.

70. Some delegations expressed their support for the consolidation of the three Departments as proposed by the Secretary-General.

71. Some delegations stressed that achieving decentralization and empowering regional commissions should constitute an integral part of the reform process. They expressed the view that concentrating the decision-making process at Headquarters was not compatible with the need for decentralization towards the field level. They expressed regret that the Secretary-General did not take any steps towards achieving decentralization.

72. Some delegations stressed the need for the Secretariat to clarify how it intended to improve system-wide coordination, which was crucial for the success of the process of implementing and delivering programmes in a comprehensive manner.

73. Some delegations enquired as to the scope of the savings to be achieved by merging the three Departments. One delegation questioned the rationale for the distribution within the new Department of the subprogrammes described in the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001.[2]

74. Some delegations expressed the view that issues concerning sustained economic growth and sustainable development had not been adequately reflected in the document, although they have been designated as priority issues in the medium-term plan. Several delegations stressed the need to ensure adequate coordination of the technical cooperation activities under the responsibility of the Department.

75. Some delegations proposed the following amendments to the narrative:

(a) In paragraph 7A.3, after the word "promote", the words "sustained economic growth" would be added;

(b) In paragraph 7A.6, in the third sentence, the words "including peace and development linkages" would be deleted;

(c) In paragraph 7A.14, in the fifth sentence, the words "including through subject-oriented special sessions" would be deleted, and in the seventh sentence, the words "as well as on the basis of inputs from the academic and research community, non-governmental organizations and the private sector" would be deleted;

(d) In paragraph 7A.52, in the second sentence, the words "the implications of the peace-development link and selected aspects of post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction" would be deleted, and in the last sentence, the words "will be expanded" would be replaced with the words "will be maintained".

Conclusions and recommendations

76. The Committee recalled its conclusions and recommendations on sections 7, Policy coordination and sustainable development, 9, Economic and social information and policy analysis, and 10, Development support and management services, of the initially proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999, contained in paragraphs 113, 128 and 135, respectively, of its report on the first part of its thirty-seventh session.[5]

77. The Committee took note of the programme narrative of section 7A of the report of the Secretary-General (A/52/303) and drew the attention of the General Assembly to the variations between the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001, as approved by the General Assembly, and the proposals of the Secretary-General.

Section 14. Crime control

78. At its 34th meeting, on 15 October 1997, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered section 14, Crime control, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 contained in document A/52/303.

Discussion

79. Some delegations expressed their reservations on the Secretary-General's proposal for the establishment of a new Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention. Those delegations stressed that General Assembly resolution 45/179 of 21 December 1990 on the enhancement of the United Nations structure for drug abuse control was adopted with the intention of giving an integral approach to the United Nations activities on drugs.

80. Those delegations also stressed that accepting the Secretary-General's proposal could endanger the General Assembly's mandate and the Member States' purposes. The establishment of the new Office, merging the Centre for International Crime Prevention and the United Nations International Drug Control Programme, could only address the drug issue through a crime approach, without paying attention to other related spheres such as social, economic and health issues. They stressed that it should not undermine the critical importance of the comprehensive programme on drug control and that the Secretariat should clearly indicate how all aspects of the drug control programme would be implemented.

81. One delegation expressed its support for the cost savings and management efficiency measures embodied in the proposal. The same delegation also indicated that, where the issues of drugs and crime clearly intersect, the organizational realignment could strengthen the United Nations capacity to respond to both. The delegation expressed the hope that both the drug control and the crime prevention work programmes would each continue to receive the

specialized treatment they deserved, and emphasized the need to ensure the distinct work programmes of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme and the Centre for International Crime Prevention, as well as the separate voluntary funding mechanism for the United Nations International Drug Control Programme. Another delegation expressed its general support for the proposal of the Secretary-General.

Conclusions and recommendations

82. The Committee recommended that the General Assembly take into consideration the views of Member States reflected above and in the introduction when it considers the Secretary-General's proposals on section 14, Crime control.

Section 22. Human rights

83. At its 34th meeting, on 15 October 1997, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered section 22, Human rights, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 contained in document A/52/303.

Discussion

84. Several delegations strongly expressed the view that there was no mandate to proceed with the integration/consolidation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner and the Centre for Human Rights into one single office. They considered that such consolidation should not be undertaken before the General Assembly had reviewed the issue and taken a decision thereon.

85. Other delegations expressed strong support for the integration/consolidation of the two offices, considering that it would result in improved conditions, better use of resources and more efficient implementation of the programme of activities. This restructuring represents a welcome step in the process of empowering the United Nations human rights mechanisms to accomplish the mandates adopted by Member States in combating human rights violations throughout the world.

86. Some delegations considered that the statement in the first sentence of paragraph 22.2 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/52/303) did not adequately reflect the mandate adopted by Member States in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action,[6] subsequent resolutions of the General Assembly on human rights and the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001.[2] Those delegations were of the view that the statement should have referred to the need to ensure that the full range of human rights, including in particular the right to development, was given appropriate attention, and that the issue of human rights was not used conditionally or selectively. They stressed that the integration of human rights into the broad range of activities of the Organization was not acceptable. Other delegations expressed support for the wording of paragraph 22.2. Many delegations considered that the issue of development was the most appropriate to be integrated fully as a cross-sectoral issue in all the activities of the Organization.

87. Several delegations questioned the working relationship of the High Commissioner with the Departments mentioned in paragraph 22.4 and the reference to "human rights components of early warning mechanisms". They considered that

there was no mandate for such reference since there was no agreement among Member States on the issue of 'early warning mechanisms' and requested the deletion of the paragraph.

88. Some delegations observed that there was no legislative basis for paragraphs 22.2 and 22.4. It was pointed out that the medium-term plan did not contain any element that supported the provisions of those two paragraphs. Those delegations expressed the view that, owing to the absence of a legislative basis, paragraphs 22.2 and 22.4 should be deleted from the text.

89. Some delegations stated that the proposed reclassification of a P-5 post in the Office of the High Commissioner to the D-level was not adequately justified.

Conclusions and recommendations

90. The Committee was unable to reach agreement on the conclusions and recommendations to be made to the General Assembly.

Section 25. Humanitarian assistance

91. At its 32nd meeting, on 14 October 1997, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered section 25, Humanitarian assistance, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 contained in document A/52/303.

Discussion

92. Many delegations emphasized the importance of the United Nations activities in the area of humanitarian assistance as proposed for the biennium 1998-1999 under section 25. Several delegations expressed support for the proposals of the Secretary-General on refocusing humanitarian assistance activities and the reorganization of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs into the Office of the Emergency Relief Coordinator. Other delegations felt that the proposals on reorganization of the activities under section 25, and expanding the functions of the Coordinator, as proposed in paragraph 25.2, were beyond the scope of the mandate established by the General Assembly in resolution 46/182 of 19 December 1991 and therefore needed to be reviewed.

93. Many delegations stressed that the Emergency Relief Coordinator should limit his activities to implementing existing mandates and queried how he would deal with issues that fell between the gaps in existing mandates. They reiterated that providing protection for and assistance to internally displaced persons was a matter of the sovereignty and responsibility of Member States and was thus subject to the approval or request of the State concerned.

94. Many Member States noted the reference to responsibilities for advocacy of humanitarian issues with political organs mentioned in paragraph 25.2 (b). It was explained that when a body such as the Security Council was considering measures such as sanctions it was useful for attention to be drawn to their potential unintended adverse impact on disadvantaged groups. Some delegations requested the deletion of the words 'notably the Security Council' in paragraph 25.2 (b) of the report of the Secretary-General (A/52/303).

95. Many members questioned the mandate for the reference in paragraph 25.2 (b) to responsibilities for advocacy of humanitarian issues with political organs. Consequently, they requested the deletion of the paragraph.

96. Many delegations questioned the process and criteria for the selection of the representative of the non-governmental organization community for participation in the works of the steering committee of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and requested detailed explanation regarding the staffing of the proposed 'small secretariat' for IASC.

97. Many delegations expressed reservations regarding the proposed new formula for consolidated appeals, since experience showed that most pledges were not translated into payments in emergency cases, and therefore it would be difficult to include rehabilitation, reconstruction and funding of human rights field missions in the consolidated appeals. Questions were raised as to whether pledges for rehabilitation and reconstruction would be considered by the donor community as a substitute for aid to development to those affected countries. In that context, those delegations requested the deletion of the second and third sentences of the narrative related to subprogramme 2, complex emergencies.

98. Some delegations questioned the rationale of the transfer of demining activities to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations since there was no mandate for that transfer. Some delegations emphasized that this activity should remain with the Emergency Relief Coordinator in accordance with section 20.3 (f) of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001.[2]

99. Some delegations expressed concern at the proposed reduction of resources under section 25. Several delegations objected to the proposal to transfer $2,309,300 to the United Nations Development Programme in respect of functions to be transferred to UNDP, and indicated that they believed that regular budget resources should not be used to finance those programmes.

100. Some delegations expressed the view that the acceptance of seconded personnel should be in accordance with General Assembly resolution 51/243 of 15 September 1997.

101. Some delegations stressed the importance they attached to the activities related to the mitigation of the consequences of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster as proposed under section 25 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 and emphasized the need to implement those activities, in particular those pertaining to the strengthening of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Chernobyl, in full, as proposed under that section.

102. Some delegations rejected the inclusion of appeals related to rehabilitation and reconstruction activities as well as the funding of human rights field operations, since it was clear that there was no mandate for those activities. They therefore requested the deletion of the second and third sentences under subprogramme 2.

Conclusions and recommendations

103. The Committee was unable to reach agreement on the conclusions and recommendations to be made to the General Assembly.

Section 26. Communications and public information

104. At its 34th meeting, on 15 October 1997, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered section 26, Communications and public information, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 contained in document A/52/303.

Discussion

105. Information was requested on the status of the recommendations contained in the report of the task force, established in March 1997, as they related to the proposals to reorganize and streamline the Department of Public Information and to strengthen its communications and outreach services. The Committee was informed that the Secretary-General had reflected those recommendations in his report (A/52/303), to be submitted to the appropriate intergovernmental bodies during the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. The Committee was also informed that the Secretary-General would ensure that the approved proposals would be elaborated by the proposed Office for Communications and Public Information and professionally implemented. This would be achieved by building on specific accomplishments, consolidating those activities that had been effective, sharpening the focus on specific themes and reorienting United Nations public information operations within a dynamic communications approach.

106. Many delegations expressed concern that the intended streamlining proposed in the activities of public information and communication would affect negatively the capacity of the Organization to fulfil the mandates in that area. Many delegations were not convinced that the narrative contained in section 26 properly translated the policy directives contained in the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001,[2] especially in the area of traditional media. Those delegations expressed their disappointment that the allocation of resources for traditional media, especially for radio, did not reflect the importance of that medium and its high cost-effectiveness in the dissemination of information to all peoples of the world.

107. Several delegations were concerned about the impact of the proposed reform measures on the effectiveness of programme implementation and on the quality of services to be provided by the Department given the resource reductions proposed. Several delegations expressed regret about the reorientation of the public information programme proposed, with greater emphasis on communications approaches, distancing itself from the purely informative mandate of the programme.

108. One delegation expressed satisfaction with the Secretary-General's recommendation that information centres forge partnership relations at the national level for their communications and outreach programmes. In that regard, some delegations expressed concern about the reorganization and streamlining of the information centres with regard to their continuing integration into the offices of the resident coordinators and were of the view that those activities should be implemented in consultation with host countries and on a case-by-case basis.

109. Several delegations expressed serious reservations regarding the recommendations contained in the first sentence of paragraph 26.3 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/52/303), related to the use of national personnel as the main conduit for programme delivery.

110. Some delegations stressed that they were not in a position to approve the proposal to raise the rank of the head of the Department to the level of Under-Secretary-General in view of the persisting financial crisis of the Organization.

Conclusions and recommendations

111. The Committee was unable to reach agreement on the conclusions and recommendations to be made to the General Assembly.

Section 27. Administrative services

112. At its 34th meeting, on 15 October 1997, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered section 27, Administrative services, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 contained in document A/52/303. The Committee had before it the proposals in respect of subsections 27A, Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Management, 27C, Office of Human Resources Management, and 27D, Support services.

Discussion

113. One delegation expressed general support for devolving responsibility to programme managers, where operations took place. As to the renaming of the Department, clarification was sought regarding the necessity of renaming the Department of Administration and Management the Department of Management, when a substantial part of section 27 remained common support services, thereby reflecting administration not management. The representative of the Secretary-General responded by indicating that as the core functions of the Department were predominately in the areas of advice, guidance and oversight, the name had been changed to reflect its primary management focus.

114. Another delegation noted the significant increase in the number of organizational units in subsection 27A, Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Management, which added complexity to a previously simple structure.

115. One delegation noted that while resources had been identified for such expenditures as furniture and equipment, no clear indication had been provided concerning the resources associated with the outsourcing referred to in the report. Another delegation sought clarification regarding the need to engage consultants for management reform, as indicated in subsection 27A. In particular, the delegation queried the non-availability of such expertise internally and was advised by the representative of the Secretary-General that while there was certain expertise internally, it remained necessary for the Organization to draw on a wider range of expertise available outside the Organization in respect of specialized re-engineering tasks.

116. In connection with subsection 27C, Office of Human Resources Management, one delegation sought clarification on where the resources relating to the Secretary-General's proposals for the establishment of a task force to review human resources activities had been reflected in the report and was informed that the task force would be implemented within existing resources.

117. A number of delegations noted the lack of uniformity in the transfer of secretariats of the Main Committees to the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services. In particular, it was noted that the secretariats of the Fifth and Sixth Committees had not been transferred to the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, although others had been and there thus appeared to be two levels of secretariats.

Conclusions and recommendations

118. The Committee took note of the information contained in subsections 27A, Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Management, 27C, Office of Human Resources Management, and 27D, Support services, of section 27, Administrative services, of the report of the Secretary-General (A/52/303).

Section 34. Development account

119. At its 35th meeting, on 17 October 1997, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered section 34, Development account, of the report of the Secretary-General of 11 September 1997 (A/52/303).

Discussion

120. Many delegations indicated that they had no objection in principle to the establishment of a development account but stressed, at the same time, that savings from reduced non-programme costs and other management efficiencies must not be achieved at the expense of the full implementation of mandated activities. In that connection, a number of delegations recalled the report of the Secretary-General on the impact of approved savings on the implementation of mandated programmes and activities (A/C.5/51/53).

121. Several delegations expressed the view that the concept of a development account should be clarified and that there should be full compliance with the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations. Other delegations asked for further clarification on the mechanism for the establishment of the development account. Several delegations expressed the view that clarification should be given on the use of unspent balances proposed to be retained at the end of the fiscal year in connection with the development account.

Conclusions and recommendations

122. The Committee noted the proposal to establish a development account. It also noted that it was not an area within the scope of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001. The modalities for its operation, as well as the role of the General Assembly in the utilization of the account, would need to be provided by the Secretariat to the Assembly at a later date.

Notes

[1] Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 6 (A/52/6/Rev.1), vol. II.

[2] Ibid., Fifty-first Session, Supplement No. 6 and corrigendum (A/51/6/Rev.1 and Rev.1/Corr.1).

[3] Ibid., Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 6 (A/52/6/Rev.1), vol. I.

[4] Ibid., vols. I and II.

[5] Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 16 (A/52/16).

[6] A/CONF.157/24 (Part I), chap. III.

ANNEX I

Agenda for the resumed thirty-seventh session of the Committee

1. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.

2. Programme questions:

   (a) Proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999:

   Section 27C. Office of Human Resources Management;
   Section 27E. Conference services;

   (b) United Nations reform: measures and proposals.

3. Adoption of the report of the Committee on its resumed thirty-seventh session.

ANNEX II

List of documents before the Committee at its resumed thirty-seventh session

A/52/6/Rev.1 (vols. I and II)	Proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 Section 27C. Office of Human Resources Management Section 27E. Conference services
A/52/16	Report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination on the work of its thirty-seventh session
A/52/303	United Nations reform: measures and proposals Proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999
E/AC.51/1997/1/Add.1	Annotated provisional agenda
E/AC.51/1997/L.2/Rev.1/Add.1	Proposed programme of work for the resumed thirty-seventh session of the Committee for Programme and Coordination
E/AC.51/1997/L.6 and Add.1-14	Draft report of the Committee on its resumed thirty-seventh session
E/AC.51/1997/INF/2	List of participants